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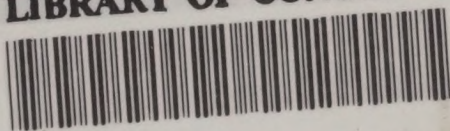
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THE MISSOURI VALLEY STORY

By Dr. H. J. Coffey



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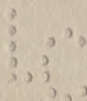
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SIS
A MISSOURI VALLEY STORY

BY
W. H. COFFEY, M. D.
Author of "TIM" and Others Stories



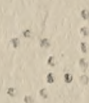
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By

W. H. COFFEY, M. D.



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To All Those in Whom it Strikes a Sympathetic
Chord, This Little Book is Dedicated.

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CHAPTER I.

"Then how can we wonder at crime in our land,
When riches o'erbalance Justice's scales held in
hand?"

It had been one of those lazy-drizzly days in the early part of a winter, not long ago, and now as the evening came on the raindrops were rapidly changing to flakes of snow. Two friends, one a city gentleman and the other a countryman, sat in genial conversation before a cheerful open fire in the latter's home.

"If I could have known that Providence intended to give us this kind of weather I would have re-

mained at home today," said the city gentleman with an expression of deep regret, as he walked across the room and looked out of the window of his friend's comfortable country home at the fields, beyond which, not far away, could be seen the Missouri river as it ran its snake-like course through the valley. For his heart had been set on spending the day in the fields with his dog and gun, and not indoors as he had been compelled to do.

"Why do you fret, Jim? I can't help but think that something is wrong with a fellow when he begins to find fault with the weather. Tomorrow may be just your kind of a day, especially if the snow doesn't prove to be too deep for the game to run. Then, you see, it will be some other poor devil's opportunity to complain; for instance, when I go out to grapple in the snow for feed for the stock."

"But," said the other, "it makes but little difference with me what kind of a day tomorrow may be, for I go to the city and to my work, for I have only twenty-four hours' leave of absence."

"Is that so, Jim?" said his friend, with a slight tone of irony in his voice, almost forgetting that he was a host. Then he said, softening a little, "You know I am so free out here in this old country home of mine where I have lived all my life that I forget you city fellows are a part of a machine. When you come out here I suppose I am to understand that you have simply dropped out, as it were, to be oiled. What part of that machine," again becoming ironical, "that you fellows so ardently worship, are you anyway, Jim? From the way you talk and act one would judge that you are the part that moves the whole concern, perhaps you are the

main piston rod and I do declare it is just too bad that you have not been able to get the kind of oil you dropped out for, and the Lord only knows when you will find the time to drop out again, eh? Then I guess there is no help for it, you must be placed back in position promptly at one o'clock tomorrow, or the machine—well, the wheels won't go around, and there'll be no grinding done—but then you say that must not happen, she must go, ile or no ile, eh?"

"Be reasonable, John. You are a sensible fellow, but surely you do not understand or else you are making fun of me. If I should stay with you a day—yes, an hour—over my time I might as well remain with you the balance of my lifetime so far as my position is concerned. You know I can't afford to lose my job. Why, don't you know, John, I would have my time

and my discharge papers thrust in my hands the moment I dared to put my face in the office door. This is a selfish world. You living here in this peaceful home, a king in your independence, cannot appreciate the real situation of those who battle from day to day in our commercial centers for the staff of life, without knowing what tomorrow may bring forth. How can a man be independent with a wife and children depending on him for support, and he on his employer for wages? He belongs to his employer; he is a slave!"

At the close of this little speech the sturdy farmer arose and kicked together the chunks of wood which had burned in two and rolled upon the hearth of the old-fashioned fireplace, with such vigor that if any one of them had been a Boss of a city machine he would have been placed beyond medical aid, but his

kicks only caused the flames to leap higher and roar with defiance and snap with anger in his very face, just as the Boss would have done with delight.

Having given vent to his feelings somewhat in this manner, he thrust his hands deep down in his trowser pockets and with bowed head he began walking, continuing thus for some time in silence; then he stopped before the window where his friend had stood when they first began to talk, and looked out upon the cold, desolate night. It had grown cold rapidly while the friends were talking, the snow storm was on in earnest and the blackness of the earth was gone from sight. The wind moaned with a doleful tone around the corners of the house as if it was sad because its victims were few, for out there all were safely housed; even the stock was sheltered in their warm

stalls. He noticed the tone of the wind, for the sound was a fit accompaniment to the thoughts that were uppermost in the farmer's mind.

Save the noise of the wind and the tick, tick of the family clock as it stood on the mantel-piece, witnessing this scene as it had witnessed many before from the position where it had stood for years, just over the fireplace, the old house was as quiet as a churchyard could be at that time of night, for the friends were busy each with his own thoughts. There they stood, John looking out on the white world, yet conscious of the blackness beneath, and Jim gazing into the spacious fireplace—and thus they perhaps would have remained for a longer time had not the clock brought John to himself by proclaiming the lateness of the hour.

“Did you hear that, Jim? it is cruel in me to keep you up so late

when you go to your work so early."

"But don't you know, John," said the other, "I would give two or three nights' sleep if necessary for the pleasure of talking over the problems of life with you, as we have done tonight? Such talks are worth more to me than a thousand flowery sermons heard while resting in a cushioned pew in some of our fashionable churches. I shall go back to the city and to my work tomorrow better able to contend with the disagreeable things of this life than ever before; conscious of the fact that I have one friend to whom I can go, and one place where I can enjoy life to some extent in spite of the many difficulties we have to face from day to day in our great cities."

"I also am glad that we have had this talk, Jim. It reminds me of the way we used to talk things over

when we were at school together. But I am sorry to hear you say that you are going back to the city so soon, for I tell you now, old partner and I want you to put it into your pipe and smoke it hard and strong, I am dead against the city and city ways. If I had a child, a girl or a boy, I would as soon raise it in hell as to raise it there. Now, that is pretty strong language and you must excuse the expression, but I mean it. Some may like the hustle and bustle of the city; the rattling of the cars; the shrill whistle of the steam engine; the glare of the lights, but Oh, how can they forget that there are many dark places among the rich and the poor in the cities, that the lights never reach; dark, dark as ten thousand holes of Calcutta. I would rather see God's own sunlight shade out into the gentle evening twilight, than a million electric lights. Yes, I would

rather hear the frogs croak than hear the engines' whistle, but the saddest of all is the insincerity so apparent in all your city life. I love to meet a friend whose voice has the ring of sincerity and whose warm hand-grasp gives you a true welcome. In the cities, so long as your money lasts, to use a common phrase, you are it—when that is gone, you are forgotten. If you would avoid the stink of the gasoline, you should ride in the automobile. Sham and deceitfulness is written everywhere in your city life, while out here every thing is real and true to nature. That is why I love this simple country solitude. I have had my heart strings pulled just about as hard as I can stand it by acts I have seen in your city."

"Actions of some particular one of the fair sex, eh, John?"

"Now look here, Jim, if I thought

that you were in earnest I would get mad, but that is altogether a mistake. You know there is not a city-bred woman among your acquaintances that could milk a cow to my notion. They don't know whether we milk the milk or milk the butter, and half of them think that eggs grow on vines like gourds and the other half haven't a single intelligent thought about anything except the latest fashions."

CHAPTER II.

"All passed on their way; not one of them knew.
That this was one of Christ's little ones too."

"No, no, not that. Nonsense. I have lived a bachelor all these years and expect to remain such. There are many things that occur in our cities to make one look on the dark side of life as you know. For instance, the other day while in the city I stood and watched a parade. It was a gala day for the City of the Kaw. The parade was made up of the many unions, each with their banners unfurled to the September breeze, with their mottos inscribed

thereon, all keeping step to the martial music. Out at the park in the afternoon men of national reputation were pouring forth their eloquence to a goodly crowd, a large number of whom, I noticed, were women. I returned to the city before the speaking was over, in order to catch my train, and to my surprise I saw a great number of men with labor badges on going with unsteady steps in and out of houses with frosted windows and lattice doors. I thought to myself, what a pity, what a pity, and then again I thought, human nature demands some kind of recreation and perhaps this is the first holiday they have had for months.

“Another day I was in the same city. It was during one of those heavy snows of last winter. You may have seen the same scene yourself, for it is a common thing in our large cities, if you

will only stop long enough to observe it. I had stopped for a minute on the corner of one of the busy streets. The wind was blowing cold and had swept the snow from the west front door of a terra cotta brick building and piled it in large drifts just around the corner. On the corner of this building in gilded letters was the words, 'The Sun.'

"Noiselessly there came a carriage of the latest style, drawn by a span of black horses, their harness covered with gold buckles, glistening in the sunshine as it now and then struck through the flying clouds. A coachman, with two long rows of gold buttons on his coat, in keeping with the buckles on the horses' harness, alighted and opened the carriage door. Then I saw a man and a woman, who at once reminded me of the fairy story, 'The Beauty and the Beast.' I look-

ed the man's countenance over in vain for a single line of kindred human feeling. I would no more have thought of asking him for a kindness than I would of asking the devil for mercy. The contrast made the woman beautiful. They stepped out, wrapped in costly furs and robes, and passed along the wind-swept path, which God seemed to have made for them, into the office. I pulled my own light overcoat more closely about me as I crossed the street. Just then I was stopped by a child's voice, 'Last edition of the Evening Sun,' he cried. I turned to get a look at him. He, seeing me turn around, naturally thought I wanted a paper, but I did not, and was about to move on when in a more pleading voice he said, as his little hand held it out to me, seeing he was about to lose a sale, 'Mister, won't you buy a paper?' I bought a paper, for I could not resist the

pleading look and tone—as I took it and gave him a piece of money, I saw that he was clad in an old coat which once belonged to someone many sizes larger than himself, and through the large meshes in the cheap stockings I could see the skin of his legs, as the cold wind whistled between them. His shoes were worn into holes and he was without rubbers. He looked like a frightened animal held at bay by bloodhounds, as he stood there shivering in the cold. He was one of those little fellows of about six or seven years with a face much too old for his little frame. And as I turned away I could not help thinking to myself, ‘what a pity that this child, who should be under the tender care of his mother—what a disgrace to our civilization, that under a legal system he is forced out upon the streets to sell papers for the few pennies his efforts may bring toward the

support of the family.' Then I thought of the man I saw get out of the carriage a few moments before, and the awful inequality of human conditions forced themselves upon my attention. The boy was a slave to the man, and every paper that he sold added to the latter's wealth. Talk about hell in the hereafter, it is here and now, where mothers haven't clothes or food for their little ones; where pinched and half-starved faces are lifted to hers for assistance in vain.

"This, a Christian nation? A government whose interest in the liquor traffic by law creates an appetite in its subjects that sends them into the direst poverty and crime! A government where it is possible that one man in a short lifetime can make?—steal one hundred and forty-nine million dollars while millions suffer for the necessities of life!

“A man who comes into my house at the dead hours of midnight and steals from me, is called a thief. I have the right to kill him or to send him to jail—but the man who holds me up in broad daylight and takes away from me by force that which rightfully belongs to me is a robber of which there are two kinds, the little and the big. The former you may kill or send to jail if you can as you would a common thief, but the latter you cannot, for he is what they call a legal robber—do you understand it? I can not. However, something is wrong with it all, or else it is a mistake our teaching that the only life worth the while is service to mankind.

“But this is not what I started to say. As awful as this is, the other of which I was about to speak comes to me as a personal matter, therefore to me so serious and has been a trouble in my life so long,

that it is always on my mind. Lately things have happened which fill my thoughts by day and my dreams by night. It seems to me that if I could tell it to some true friend it would help me. Since Mother went, you know I have had no one to go to in confidence when things go wrong with me.

"As I stood at the window just now, the whole matter passed in review before me, for it was just such a night as this, only it was colder and the cruel wind moaned more sadly and piled the snow in deeper drifts around the corners of the large buildings in the city."

Then he stopped and made some remark about the tobacco being very strong, that it fairly choked him and affected his eyes, which were weak. "I had my eyes tested and fitted for glasses," he explained, as he removed and rubbed them vigorously, "but they are no good."

The memory of it all just then was too much for words. His friend understood it and after a little he said, "Go on, John, tell me all about it—what is troubling you?"

"No, I had just thought of telling you when the clock struck, and now you must not be kept up from your rest a minute longer, listening to the ramblings of an old bachelor farmer."

"You can make me go to bed if you will, John, but you cannot make me sleep, neither can I make myself. I have a woman's curiosity and you have told me too much already not to tell me the rest, therefore, you might as well settle yourself down and relieve your mind. If it takes you all night, I will get an early start to the city, you see."

CHAPTER III.

"It was at dusk on a winter's day
That one of Christ's little ones begged her way."

After some hesitation the farmer replied, "Well, fill your pipe with some of that old Virginia twist and when you leave off smoking, mind you, I will know that you are getting sleepy and will cut my story short.

"It was early on a December evening, followed, as I was saying, by just about such a night as this, that after I had gotten through with my business at the stock yards I started out and soon found myself upon one of the busy thoroughfares

of the city, without any place in particular to go and without anything specially to do. I knocked along, or rather was jostled along, without being noticed by anyone save now and then a poor, forlorn brother begging for enough money to get a cup of coffee or a supper. Their red noses and bleary eyes told me too plainly what they wanted; they were old timers, you know, who know a countryman at first sight, hayseed or no hayseed, for they make us fellows their specialty.

“It is one of my peculiarities, I suppose, that when I am in a large city and have the time I always get upon one of the most frequented streets and watch the faces of the various people as they go by in the endless procession of humanity. I can't say that I enjoy this, for one sees a great many disagreeable faces, and is apt to become soured by judging his fellow man too

harshly, but unconsciously I find myself speculating on the different characters that drift past in the human tide.

“Here I spot a Jew, there a Gentile, now and then a man whom you feel you can trust as a brother, then one who goes slipping by in the thickest of the crowd, who makes you think of the murderer in the alley only waiting for a chance to stab you in the back. Then there is the character you nearly always see in the crowd, the hypocrite with his sugared smile on—meek, oh, yes, but just under the sheep’s clothing you can see the wolf’s hide. He goes to church? Yes, very likely, yet if he prays he simply prays his soul deeper into hell, for if there is a place in that infernal region hotter than another, there you may look for the hypocrite. There goes a lawyer, a doctor, a man of business, all rapidly passing in one

mixed mass of humanity; some tall, some short, some broad, some narrow, then I wonder how many are broad in mind and soul.

“Among all these faces are two, one sometimes sees in these crowds, that, having once seen, are never forgotten—one is the face that Riley so aptly describes when he says:

‘I caught for a second across the crowd,
Just for a second and barely that,
A face, pox-pitted and evil-browed,
Hid in the shade of a slouch-rim’d hat,
With small grey eyes of a look as keen
As the long, sharp nose that grew between.

And I said, ’tis a sketch of Nature’s own
Drawn in the dark o’ the moon, I swear;
On a tattler of Fate that the winds have
blown

Hither and thither and everywhere;
With its keen, little, sinister eyes of grey
And nose like the beak of a bird of prey.

and the other is a sad, child-like

face, prematurely old, marked with the unmistakable lines of suffering, with haunting eyes that you look into deeply and seem to see the very soul quivering there—honest, confiding eyes, seen only in the head of the innocent.

“It was just such a face as this that I saw that evening, Jim, that I want to tell you about. It was a little girl, she could not have been more than ten years old, if that. She sat there on the sidewalk holding in her little, bony hand a battered tin cup. Her eyelids were drooping and I could not see her eyes at first. I stepped aside, without knowing why, but I know now—it was to see how many fathers and mothers would stop and give alms to that poor little mite there on the sidewalk, wrapped in a coarse, tattered shawl. I must have stood there fully ten minutes—it seemed much longer to me—but not one stopped,

and surely there were many fathers and mothers passed by her while I stood there. Some of them must have been fathers and mothers for they bore the marks of age with care lines written on their faces which we so often see on the faces of parents. Many of them were clothed in the robes of the rich, and I noticed that they avoided touching her as much as the crowd would permit, as though she were something unclean, passing by with their costly robes drawn closely about their persons as if afraid she would contaminate them.

“But just as one of them in warm furs brushed by the child closer than usual, she looked up and I saw her wistful eyes following the passer-by. It was only for a moment, simply the glance of a beggar child, but it was as an electric shock to me. My first impulse was to clasp the child to my breast. In a mo-

ment I said to myself, 'Impossible, it cannot be.'

"Jim, did you ever stand on the banks of a stream while men with grappling hooks fished for the body of an unknown person and, just as the cry came to your ears that they have found it, the thought comes to you, 'Perhaps this is my brother?' You turn away with awe at the very thought, you feel as though you can not bear to see the corpse, with those rusty iron hooks buried deep into the flesh of your brother. I tell you, Jim, it makes a mighty difference whether it is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, or not. For a moment I had seen my lost sister in those eyes and it was with the greatest effort that I refrained from crying aloud, 'Sis, Sis!' for that was what I always called her."

He stopped and looked long into the fire. What he saw there no one

will ever know—presently he went on:

“I have never told you, Jim, for I have not spoken of it to anyone for a long time, not since Mother’s death, but at the time I left school so suddenly, as you remember, I had a sister who left home, just at that age when she was neither a girl nor woman, a thoughtless, yet a responsible age. When I arrived home I found the old folks greatly disturbed, and when I asked my mother where Sis was, and when she would come home again, I remember Mother simply turned her head away and hid her face in her apron and then sat down in the chimney corner there, and my father put out his trembling hand and said, ‘That will do, John, that will do, my boy,’ in a voice that was not steady and was altogether unlike his own. Of course, I soon came to understand it all, and I see now how

I must have with my boyish questions made their poor hearts ache with pain when they were almost, if not altogether, broken.

CHAPTER IV.

"He prayeth best who loveth best."

"Owing to this great sorrow and its effect upon father and mother, I did not go back to school, as you know; they needed me at home, for from that time my father, who had always been a strong, hearty man, began to change. For a long time after she went away, he would not speak her name nor allow Mother or me to call it in his presence without a word of disapproval. But after years went by and no word came from her, he first began to name her in his evening prayers.

It was then that the change became more marked. He became absent-minded. He would go to town and return without the things that Mother had sent him for. He would be carrying on a conversation, stop, and then forget where he had left off. He would turn the cows out after milking them, and then get up in the middle of the night and put on his clothes and go to turn them out, forgetting that he had already done so.

"It became so noticeable that the neighbors began to make remarks about it. Mother and I thought that we knew what was troubling him, but it seemed best to let him fight it out by himself. Finally, one day in the fall of the year, he and I were plowing for wheat in the lower field. Father had stopped to rest his team and he sat down, as had been his custom for some time, on the trunk of that old sycamore

tree that hangs far out over Bee creek and that lies so close to the ground; the very place where she and I used to sit as children, and with wrapping twine for lines and bent pins for hooks, fish for minnows, while Father plowed in the field near by. This day he called me to him, and when I got there he was sobbing like a child. 'There is no use trying,' he said, 'this is where she—I can't stand it any longer. Go, John, find her and bring her home.'

"We unhitched our teams and went to the house and when we told Mother what we intended to do, she sat down and wept, wept for very joy at the prospect of seeing her lost child. It was decided that I start early in the morning for the city. I do not remember ever seeing Father so happy as in his anticipation he instructed me in the minutest details, cautioned me time

after time not to say this thing or that, as it might hurt her feelings, and then he said, 'John, you know that she won't want you to consider her an object of charity. Tell her that this money I send is hers and that there is plenty more out here that rightfully belongs to her, and that I want her to come home and get it.'

"If my father had any doubt about finding her, he did not show it. I got an early start the next morning. Full of hope, I looked for her for several days in the city. From hell-hole to hell-hole, from red-light to red-light, but each day I had to return without her. Father did not give up so easy, but said we would both go the next day, which we did. I never saw him so determined. He was so untiring in his efforts to find her. He would walk miles and miles—as long as we

searched he did not complain of weariness.

"But after days of search I noticed that he was going beyond his strength, and, realizing that our efforts were of no avail, I suggested that we return home, yet every time that I suggested it, he would plead with me like a child to go on. 'Johnnie, let us go a little further, she might be there.'

"It was pitiful to hear him—with full confidence that they must know—ask people we met if they knew of his little girl, his little girl Mary Jane. Again and again we went, until weeks lengthened into months and months into years and each time after returning home he was completely prostrated.

"The long searching, the long and fruitless watching was of no use. The disappointment began to tell on the old folks. Mother never had much to say. Her feelings and

desires were always strongly repressed because of her love and sympathy for Father. They kept sending me, however, from place to place for a long time. Then, finally, as we gave up hope, we stopped talking about her, though I never went to the city without looking for her.

“The old folks began to break rapidly under the strain and continued disappointment. Father became so feeble that he could not do any more work on the farm. His thoughts seemed to be withdrawn from earthly things. He would sit by the fire and stare for hours at a time, at the flames. We knew his mind was on Sis for he was heard to murmur, ‘We will find her some day.’ The only thing connected with his former life that he manifested any interest in was the old Flintlock church up on Bee creek where he had attended and had

been a devout member nearly all his life. Finally he left off going even there and then the end came quickly.

“You must understand that my father’s religion was of the old school. He was what some people might today call a hard man. He walked the straight and narrow road himself and expected everyone else to do the same. Religion was to him God’s law, and that law must be obeyed. He was what is called a Hardshell Baptist; they are almost extinct today. But in his time the few who attended the old church up on Bee creek were of the same type as himself. They lived their religion; there was no playing at it for them. They never tried to deceive their fellow men. And they knew full well that they could not deceive their God. They took Him into their confidence and their everyday life. He was

with them when they broke their ground that received the seed, and He was with them, the same God, when they reaped their harvest of sunshine or of shadows. And to this austere religion I attributed this inflexibility on the part of my father, that sent his only daughter into exile when it was discovered that she had left the narrow path.

“Here is Father’s old Bible; it is thumbmarked from cover to cover, not just a few pages here and there, but all of them from the first to the very last page has been used as you see. From it he had gotten but part of its teachings and its truths. To him both heaven and hell were stern realities, this life but a fleeting shadow, to be endured, but not enjoyed. He studied this book more than any other. I am not complaining of father, for a truer man to his convictions never lived. He loved us all as he did his own soul.

To me it seems that the old religion taught too much that God's kingdom was in the skies, or in some far distant clime, but I tell you, my brother, that God's kingdom is here among His people, here where service is. Nature has brought me close to my God. I love her as an open book. She has taught me all I know. The birds of the air as they have cared for their young and the tiny seeds that multiply themselves by the kind assistance of nature's sunshine and rains has taught me a great lesson out here in my country home. Yet after all, the greatest study is human nature, as shown in our large cities. Father missed that part of life. He only communed with his God.

"To me the flowers and trees, every thing that lives and grows, that is beautiful, has always been a sweet communion. As I see it we must look at the whole of life, if we

desire to get all there is in it. There is a dark side and there is a sunny side. Therefore, we can make our lives dark by always looking on the dark side, but if we will be honest with ourselves we will see some sunshine even in the darkest hours.

“Mother kept up with her round of household duties, waiting on father as had always been her custom, not thinking of herself. But the years of silent suffering which had made her almost tolerant to pain began to show on her face and as she grew whiter and more frail, the beautiful spirit within found saintly expression. Father’s need of care seemed to have been the only thing that kept mother up. The separation was short, for she soon followed him. After this I was left alone in this house.

CHAPTER V.

"What has she done, this beggar child,
Out in the cold, this night so wild?"

"During these years I at first thought continually of Sis. It seems to me now that I never forgot her for a minute, but as my search had grown more and more hopeless with the passing years, and as my time had been more fully taken up with the cares of my parents, I thought less constantly of her and had almost lost hope of finding her, but after father and mother went I was left alone most of the time, therefore my thoughts frequently went back to her, and when that child down there on the side-

walk looked up with those truthful eyes which I remembered so well having seen in my youth, when Sis guided us in our play, I was a boy again, looking into the eyes of my sister, but in a moment the feeling passed and I knew this child was not the one that played with me in my boyhood days. That child, if living, would be a mature woman some older than myself.

“I could not trust myself to look at her again, so I turned away and began to walk as fast as I could. I had been going thus for some time, lost in my bitter thoughts, when I became aware that everyone seemed to be going in the opposite direction, which proved such an impediment to my progress that I paused. While I had no place in particular to go, I wanted to go somewhere, anywhere to get away from myself if possible, so I crossed the street only to find the same condition

there. After struggling against the living current for a time I allowed myself to be turned about like Poe's man of a crowd, threw myself in the human tide and drifting with it I soon found myself like all the rest, going at a breakneck speed, and if you had asked me where I was going I could not have told you. But such speed must soon bring us somewhere and we presently reached the Auditorium theatre, where on the poster we read, 'Tonight, Joe Jefferson, in 'Rip Van Winkle.''

" 'Shall I go in?' was the question. 'Have I raced all this distance to no purpose?' I could feel a round silver dollar in my pocket. 'Is it worth it?' I thought; 'this money I have worked so hard for?' I felt uncomfortable — I imagined that some of the bystanders were reading my thoughts, which were as plain, it seemed to me, as the nose

on my face, so I moved restlessly out to the edge of the crowd.

"I could feel the dollar in my pocket and I said, 'It will take that much, if not more, to get a seat in the balcony among men. Is it a good investment to give this dollar to Jefferson, who does not need it? And just then the underlying thought which had been troubling me all the time and which I had been trying to fight down came flashing uppermost into my mind; 'Would it not have been better for me to have given it to that poor little child huddled down back there on the sidewalk holding in her tiny hand that battered tin cup?' 'What music,' I thought, 'would the jingle have been to her ears as I dropped the money into the cup.'

"Straightway, without any hesitation, I passed the theatre door and began to retrace my steps. It seemed a long way back and I thought I

would never get there. Something seemed to say to me all the time, 'Too late, too late.' Everyone, I was sure, took special delight in stopping directly in front of me and standing there while I walked around; it seemed everything was done to delay my progress, while I was growing frantic in my haste, for I was by this time saying over and over to myself, 'While that child is not my sister, she can be but one other, her child. How stupid in me not to have thought of that before.'

"I crossed and re-crossed the street in order to avoid the crowd that I might make better progress. Finding this of little avail, I hailed a passing cab and told the man to drive like mad to the northeast corner of Twelfth and Main streets, so great was my fear that the child might be gone. Soon I was at the place. Alighting and dismissing the

cabman, I could see that the little form was not in the same position I had seen it a short time before, but was huddled down on the sidewalk and as I drew nearer I could see that her head had dropped forward and her hand had somewhat relaxed its hold on the cup, which was now resting on the sidewalk. I was delighted and quickly dropped the money into the cup with all the noise possible, but she did not move.

“After a moment’s pause I said with some fear, ‘Sis, Sis,’ for I had already begun to feel that something was wrong. Taking her little hand in mine, I found it as cold as death. Those eyes I longed to see open would not respond to my gaze or touch. I said, ‘The child is freezing,’ and throwing off my coat, I hastily wrapped it about her form and began rubbing and chafing her hands in my frenzy as best I could,

calling her all the while, 'Sis, Sis!' and trying to raise the curtains which hid the eyes I would have given the world to see, if only for a moment, but all in vain. As I think of it now, it must have been a strange sight to the passing crowd to see a man sitting on the sidewalk hugging a dirty beggar child and crying, 'Sis, Sis!' as if his heart would break; but then there are times, Jim, when a fellow doesn't care what the world thinks, and this was one of them to me. That child, with her toes showing through her shoes, clad in a thin calico dress, all faded and soiled, and an old worn out shawl, the only clothing covering the delicate form, was more to me than all of the unsympathetic crowd which gathered around us in idle curiosity.

CHAPTER VI.

"Vice is a monster of so frightful a mien,
As to be hated, needs but to be seen."

"Someone must have called a police ambulance, which soon came and took the child and me to the station, and there I told the officers all I knew about the child.

"Did you ever visit an emergency room at a police station, Jim? Some give it the dignified name of hospital. If you haven't then you need never want to, for many are the heart-rending sights one can see there in a day. I was there but a few short hours, but it was enough for me. The station is in the North End, you know, and perhaps you

pass it every day, but to know what goes on in the inside you must see it as I did. We entered the station on the market side through a large iron gate which closed with a loud clang, shutting us in, while the crowd pressed hard on the outside, peering through the iron grating. The bumping over the cobblestones, the almost constant clang clang of the ambulance gong, the shout of the driver as the crowd slowly got out of the way—none of these seemed to disturb the child as she lay so white and helpless on the stretcher. There is nothing in the wide world that so appeals to a man, that gets so close to his heart, as a little, helpless child. You would protect them with your very life. You feel that you must throw your strong arms around them and in the words of Tim cry: 'God bless them every one.'

"The child was quickly removed

from the ambulance on the stretcher and was taken by two officers down an iron stairway into a dark-like room while another officer, bidding me follow, led the way across the court into a side room, then up a flight of iron steps into a long room in which were a number of officers, where I was scrutinized. Had questions fired at me from all sides, gruff and strong. They examined my hands. They took my name and address and full description and put them on record. After this was all over I was allowed to go down in what they called the operating room. We retraced our steps into the court, across the court, then down another flight of iron steps into a roughly finished basement room where the child lay white and cold.

“Words almost fail me when I try to describe this room to you. I don’t know of any place to compare

it to. As I gazed at my surroundings, I could think of nothing but a human slaughter house. The only daylight in the room was a small window up near the ceiling through which God's sunlight never penetrated. An electric light suspended from the ceiling hung over the wooden, trough-like table. The floor was of concrete, sloping to a drain in the centre. It was splattered and stained here and there with human blood. It looked as though it was never free from it. The bloody water flowed from the trough-like table, on which, at the present time lay a man whose scalp was literally cut to pieces. The doctor was busy shaving the hairs from the ragged pieces and threatening the poor devil with dire punishment, if he did not lie still. After finishing the shaving process, he began to sew with just about as much feeling or sympathy as I

would show while sewing my broken harness, I asked the trouble. 'Plain drunk,' said the doctor.

"In one corner of the room, on a cot, lay a girl about eighteen or nineteen years of age, to whom an officer was applying a stick with something like a sponge on the end of it. Every time he touched her with it, she cried out with pain. Then she would begin to sing or try to recite something. Then doze off when the officer would touch her again. And from time to time he would make her stand up and walk the floor. 'Morphine route,' said the officer. 'Not this time,' said the doctor. 'Yes, you have cheated me this time, but you will not do it again,' shrieked the girl, with defiance in her voice.

"After the doctor and officer had finished the work at hand, and things had become a little quiet, they left for a short time, and in

the stillness, a rat stole out of its hiding place several times to pick up here and there pieces of flesh lying on the floor near the operating table and then he would scurry back again. When the Doctor returned to his duties, I could smell something stronger than coffee, and while he was taking further measures necessary to restore the child, my thoughts were busy with the questions: 'What next? Who is she? How can I find out? What must I do? And what will I be allowed to do? As I thought, one thing became clear to me, come what might, I would not lose sight of her; in the meantime I would do what I could for her. With this decision I began to give my whole attention to the little girl, watching developments.

"I had not long to wait. Presently as she was partly restored they began fixing to take her away

and I wanted to know where they were going to take her. They said: 'To the City Hospital,' of course, where else? I had heard of that place before and shrank from the thought of her being taken there. I asked the privilege of taking her to a private institution and being responsible for her. After some discussion this was granted.

"I took the half-conscious form in my arms and we were taken to the Sisters' Hospital. For a night and a day the little thing hovered between life and death, while my anxiety held me there almost constantly. It was a fight royal, but the victory over death was won and she fell into a quiet sleep from which she awoke with a clear mind. I shall never forget the glad moment as I saw the (to me) beautiful eyes open and gaze around the room with a wondering expression.

Just then one of the Sisters gave her some nourishment, which she accepted in silence. A few minutes later one of the Sisters asked her what her name was, to which she replied 'Mamie.'

" 'Mamie what?' asked the Sister.

" 'Just Mamie,' she answered, in a voice that was scarcely audible even to the Sister.

"After letting her rest for a while the Sister asked again softly: 'Can't you tell your mother's name; my little girl.'

"The child looked distressed and weakly exclaimed: 'I want to go home to my maw—she's sick and can't do nothing.

"You can imagine, Jim, that I listened with breathless interest to those words as they fell from the lips of the little waif, my heart beating almost to suffocation. Again hope grew strong within my

breast and I felt that I must learn more.

“Leaning over and speaking so as not to frighten her I said: ‘Tell me your maw’s name, Mamie, and where she lives, so I can go tell her where you are. I’ll help her and don’t you worry.’

“She looked at me intently for a moment before answering, as though taking my measure, and then said, slowly, that her mother’s name was Jane. She could not tell where she lived, but said that it was a long row of houses just the same kind, with doors opening on the alley where a lot of women and children lived. No. 104, and that you went south from the market, but it was a long way. At this she made another effort to get out of bed, saying: ‘Let me go, please, mister, My maw wants me.’

“I told her to stay where she was

and that I would go and find her mother.

“With this meager description I left her with the Sisters, who said that nourishment and care was about all she needed, and I went out again to seek for my sister.

CHAPTER VII.

"No one so accursed by fate,
No one so desolate'"

All day long I looked for her in the destitute places of your city. But I could find no trace of her.

"The latter part of the evening found me at the McGuire flats, four long rows of miserable little tenements where no grass grew and where no flowers were, for the space was taken up with the building which opened upon the narrow alley. Now the women and children had returned from their work and were gathering at their front doors drinking out of tin cans. Crowds of children gathered

around. Some were so dirty that you could not tell whether they were white or black except by their hair. I picked my way among them. Some stopped in their play and gazed at me while others paid no attention to me whatever.

"I was looking for No. 104 and it was getting dark rapidly. Some of the numbers were over the doors, others were on the casings and were dim from age, while others were missing altogether. For this reason I knew that I must hasten. At the entrance to the alley I came upon an umbrella mender sitting in the open side of a piano box which, stood on end, serving as his house and place of business. He was busily plying his trade in the fading light. To him I applied for information. Without looking up he pointed toward the lower end of the alley and with a gruff voice said, 'Ask down there.'

"A few steps further on I stopped and asked a group of small children if they could tell me where I could find Jane, Mamie's mother?

"'Mamie's maw? Oh, yes, she lives down there at the end of the row.' Another voice added: 'She's awful sick, mister.' Then as I turned to go on another called out: 'Say, mister, does yer know whar Mamie is? She ain't been home for two days, and her maw's most crazy.'

"At last I arrived at No. 104, which I was able to see by the flickering light of a passing wagon. When I knocked at the rickety door, it sounded as if the house was empty and my hopes fell again. I was full of apprehension. What if it was not my sister after all? What should I do? Must I wait or must I go back?

"Pushing open the door, I looked in. All was darkness within.

While I hesitated, I heard a voice that brought a lump to my throat and made my heart jump, a voice low and sweet to my ears, but trembling with anxiety as it said: 'Who is it?

"I knew the voice full well, but it was all darkness within. I was afraid to speak, not knowing what to say as I was afraid of agitating a sick woman. Again the voice repeated with a tone of some alarm, 'Who is it? Have they found my child?'

"As I stood in uncertainty a woman came from an adjoining room with a lamp and then I saw my sister lying on a miserable cot in the corner of the room. 'Who are you? Where is my child?' she asked. She was so greatly changed with ravages of disease, with anxiety for her child and with much weeping that I doubted if, after all, this was my sister. But if not, she

was a frail woman in extreme poverty and great distress, and my heart filled with pity and deep sympathy. Raising herself on her elbow she again demanded, 'Do you know anything about my child, Mamie?'

"I hastened to assure her that Mamie was all right and that if she would calm herself I would tell her all I knew about her child.

"I pulled a stool up to her cot and sat down and I told her in as few words as possible what had happened. The reaction following her deep anxiety was almost too much for her and the weak arm gave way, the weary head fell upon the bundle of rags that served as a pillow and the eyes closed. I took up the wasted hand in my own and assured her that Mamie was safe. That I would see to her wants hereafter.

"As I tried to reassure her she

opened her eyes and looked at me with intense earnestness as if trying to recognize me. The eyes were the same as those Mamie had raised to me on the street, the eyes of my sister. Then I leaned forward and said, 'Sis; Sis! She knew me almost instantly.'

CHAPTER VIII.

"Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the fault I see."

At this point John got up and walked the floor for some minutes, then he resumed:

"I can't tell you in detail what took place between us, but in substance it was as I shall tell you.

"After the first excitement wore off somewhat, I told her as briefly as I could all that had happened since she left home, very much the same as I have told you except Father and Mother's death. She listened, eagerly drinking in every word, and her wonderful eyes glistened with tears which fell from

the long lashes and flowed over the wasted cheeks, as I told her how Father had longed to see her and had always said, "We will find her some day."

"After I had finished my story, Sis lay quiet for a long time with her eyes closed and her wasted hand in mine, as if she was gathering strength for what she wanted to say. Finally she spoke: 'It grieves me to know that you and father sought me in such places.'

"'But, Sis, I said—

"'Don't you excuse yourself, Bud. It was the most natural thing for you to do to seek me there. But from such vile places I have been free, thank God, and I hope He has used me as an instrument in saving other girls before it was too late from a life of sin and shame. Because I did their sewing as a means of making a living for

myself and child, I came in contact with many of them.

“‘You must know by this time something of what it means to a girl in the condition that I was to come to a large city like this. You say, why did I come? Where else could I go?’

“‘I saw that the least thing I said would to my sister’s mind be misconstrued and that it was mine to listen.

“‘She went on: ‘I can not tell you all that happened. A stranger in a strange place, I went from door to door, but with the cold hand of indifference I was turned away from places where I asked and expected protection.

“‘Having been raised in a Christian home, in my repentance for my sin I naturally turned to the church people for encouragement and help.

“‘Where is there a home under the control of the Protestant

church that cares for the unfortunate girls? Where is there a hospital in charge of the Christian people, for the sick and the needy? Are they living the Christ-life they profess?

“ ‘What is the matter with the church people of to-day? It takes money to belong to a church in a city, therefore our churches are composed of the well-to-do people, people who do not have to labor with their hands from day to day for a living. I have tried the church, it is a cold institution. They will greet you at the door, shake hands with you in a formal way. It always reminds me of the old pump in the barnyard at home, perhaps you have forgotten it, but many a time you and I have gone down there to draw water for the stock on a hot day, and don't you remember how the handle worked before you poured the water in that

primed it? Well, that is the way those people shake hands with you, a kind of pump handle style. They do it because they feel that it is their duty. They need priming with the spirit of the sincere love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

“ ‘You go to church and listen to the minister tell about the beautiful missionary spirit of the women and of the money given by them for foreign missions. While in their homes are girls that serve them in their dining rooms and kitchens, whose skin is as white and whose souls are as precious in the sight of God as their own. Yet they will elbow these girls for days, weeks, months and even years and never mention church to them, never invite them to sit at the Lord’s table.

“ ‘What do you think of that kind of religion? Do you think that the recording angels will strain their

ears to catch every word that falls from the lips of these saints, about the heathen in foreign lands, when they have here close at hand those more willing to hear? And what are they doing for them? The folks of our fashionable churches must understand that it is not their money we want so much as their fellowship and sincere good will. That they must meet us, if they meet us at all, on an equality so far as religion is concerned. But that would breed familiarity, they say. That is their excuse. Perhaps God will accept it. I don't know. I only know that the church is not the power for good among the working class that it should be. In my opinion the reason for it is not far to search. While the church is not performing its duty, places of sin are always open and the glowing lights of hell beckon you at every corner to come in. It



seems to me that some natures must face the lowest pits of hell before they can begin to re-build their character.

“‘I felt that I was the most sinful being on the face of the earth. I had struck rock bottom on which I must build a future of which my child would not be ashamed. I found work in a restaurant at last, peeling potatoes in a back room. There I got my meals and enough money to pay for my bed. When I was taken sick I was sent to the City Hospital. I remained there a fortnight, when they discharged me with my baby in my arms.

“‘Then the real battle for life began. I was weak and heart-sick, yet had a strong desire to live—live for my child. All my efforts were useless. I could not find work. Many said if it wasn't for the child they would employ me, but I could not give her up; I would not, I

vowed that I would starve on the street first, which I came near doing.

You will understand how intense my suffering was, wandering the streets when I tell you that I went down to the river with my child in my arms, my mind made up, for some unresistable power was taking hold of me. I know now that my mind was becoming unbalanced from long suffering. It seemed to me at first that I must do it to protect my child. To me death was no enemy but my friend.

For some reason I stood for a moment there on the dark and slippery bank of the Missouri River watching the large cakes of ice as they jostled each other with great force along the cold and sluggish stream. One step, just one step would have ended all. But the cry of my little babe as she lay on my breast was enough, thank God, to bring me to a

realization of the awfulness of what I was about to do. All the teachings of my former life came flashing over me, yet I could easily have thrown myself in, but my child, I could not commit murder. I shrank away and from that time on I have wanted to live for her.

Finally I found this place, which made it possible for me to keep my child with me. Days, weeks and months lengthened into years and there was scarcely a day up to three months ago, as they came to me for their sewing, that I did not have a heart to heart talk with some poor unfortunate girl, many a time sending for her parents. Had them meet their child in this room, seen them take her to their hearts and to their homes again. So naturally has this work come to me that it seems as if it might have been sent of God, sewing for them

as best I could, as I tried to call them back to the better life. It was not hard to get their confidence.

CHAPTER IX.

"There is no death! The stars go down to rise upon some fairer shore."

"'Bud! If I had the time and the strength to tell you some of the pitiful stories that have been wrung from the hearts of these girls as I have plead with them to quit their life of sin and shame. But then, you can't understand it, you have never known what it is to suffer for something to eat; you have never known what it is to suffer from cold without any place to go, save the ones I have named; when you were forced to walk the streets all night to keep warm; driven from doorway to doorway

and from shelter to shelter; and as you drag your body on and on you feel like crying out at Nature for being so hard and cruel, but it is not Nature that is cruel, for Nature is God's law and God is good. It is only the people who are hard and cruel.

“ ‘The world has progressed, but it has not outgrown white slavery. The inequity of life here is hideous. We do not need to have hell preached to us, for we know it is here. The poor working people must feel that the churches are deeply concerned about them, before they can reach them. There are many around us everywhere who are falling beneath their burdens. That man loves God most who helps man most. With His outstretched hand Christ touched humanity in its direst need. Through service I have come very

close to my Savior and in serving others I have been saved.

“ ‘Oh, Bud, it was pitiful that I should have left my childhood home, the father and the mother I loved so well and you, the chum and playmate of my childhood days, the clean country air, wholesome surroundings of home, to face the misery and blackness of despair. Homeless and alone in a great city! But, through my hard experience, I have been able to whisper hope and comfort to many another despairing one, and I am almost content, especially now that I have seen you and know that my child will be cared for.’

“She paused from exhaustion. After resting for a while she continued:

“ ‘Of late I have been too weak to do any sewing, therefore I have seen less of them, yet some of them have come from time to time and

what they have given me and what Mamie has gotten on the street has been sufficient to keep us alive.'

" 'But to-morrow,' I exclaimed, 'I shall take you home.'

" 'Home,' she said, "for Mamie that is best. I have prayed all these years that I might live long enough to see Mamie in a better home than this. God has answered my prayers. But for me, my home is where I can serve God, and here I have found service, service I would gladly continue, but it is nearly finished. Oh, for time, for time. There are so many girls who need my help but I must go. Things are getting dark and darker,' she said.

"I felt the wasted hand slip on my arm.

"Then she said: 'It is lighter now, Bud, yet I must hasten.'

"Then I realized that my sister was dying, I knew the thought uppermost in her mind was of

Mamie and I assured her again that I would care for her and give her my name, her name. Then she was quiet for a long time as if gaining strength for one supreme effort. In my weak way I tried to assure her that everything was all right. I could not bring myself to think that I must lose her just as I was finding her. “‘We will get Mamie and then we will all go home to’—

“Then she said: ‘I know it all, Bud, there is nobody there now, they are all gone. More than once at night have I hovered around the old home; hugged the stock in the barnyard; crawled up to the window and looked in and seen you all gathered peacefully around the cheerful fireplace. It was the one joy of my isolated life next to that of being with my own child, that this unhappy heart of mine has known since the night I was’—but

she did not finish the sentence. She could not say the word, but went on: 'The last time I was there I saw the new-made graves.'

" 'I bear no ill-will toward anyone. My father was a good man, but my sin was the unpardonable one to him. I did not suppose that he ever could forgive me. I thought he could not, but I knew that I had my Heavenly Father's forgiveness.'

" 'Yes, Sis, your earthly father forgave you a thousand times before he died.'

"Then I heard her say, "That is all. Care for my child, keep her. She can be Sis to you.'

"And the last words my sister said, so low, yet the tone was such that I had to look, as she said: 'Here I am, Father.'

"It was as if she spoke to some dear one in our very presence. It might have been our earthly father's spirit or our Father in

Heaven, she saw. That I do not know. Her expression was as if she was about to greet some dear friend and the trembling lips moved with the words, 'Here I am. She died with that happy expression on her face.'

CHAPTER X.

"He took her from the haunts of woe and sin,
One of Christ's little ones, home with him."

As John finished his story, he crossed the room to the window and Jim followed. With the coming of the dawn they could see three graves, father, mother and Sis, all covered with snow, lying side by side.

"You see, John," said Jim, as he laid his hand in a sympathetic way on his friend's shoulder, "whatever their differences in this life, how far apart their footsteps in the walks of life may have led them, Nature has brought them all close together and given each a covering

of purity. God is no respecter of persons."

"But Mamie, John, Mamie?" asked Jim.

"Mamie, oh, yes, *little* Sis," said John, with a strong accent on *little*. His facial expression changed as if by magic.

"That is the sweetest name I ever heard, and she is one of the sweetest girls I ever knew. She has brought nothing but joy into my life.

At this John, almost with boyish glee, beckoned Jim through a door into an adjoining room. What a contrast to the other rooms with their old-fashioned furniture. Here everything was modern and up to date; a beautiful brass bed with its snowy counterpane; maple furniture. Everything, in fact, about the room denoted refinement and girlish taste, even to the college pennant on the wall over the door.

The pictures blended with the dainty and artistic decorations. John took great care that he did not disturb a single thing in the room as he moved about as though it was something sacred to him. And with much pride in his voice he said:

“This is her room. Just now she is away at school, and that is what makes me so lonesome, you see. That is why I have kept you up all night while I unburdened my heart to you. Forgive me, friend, keep it a secret, I know you will.

“Come back here Christmas time and you will find in this old house sunshine everywhere—for *Little Sis* will be here.”

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